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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

C/MC Chrono

National Intelligence Council

NIC No. 03556-85  
18 July 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: George Kolt  
National Intelligence Officer for Europe

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts on the Balkans

1. The NIO/Europe and DDI/EURA sponsored a conference on Balkan regional affairs on 11-13 June to give community and outside analysts an opportunity to discuss trends in the region--both the general patterns of instability and efforts at regional cooperation. Personally, I came away with several strong impressions and some ideas for follow-up projects which I wish to outline for you.

2. My first and strongest impression is a sense that the Balkans remains the Balkans: Despite its post-World War II quietude, the region remains a potential hotbed for crises that could expand beyond its boundaries. As our key noter Bob Barry, ex-DAS in STATE/EUR and ex-Ambassador to Sofia, put it, he expects that:

- US policymakers, possibly soon, will be faced with a crisis in the Balkans.
- The crisis will most likely come as a surprise to them.
- They probably would not find ready answers from the intelligence community to all of their questions. He praised the intelligence analysis he has used in the past (and I would specifically point to [Redacted] typescript\* of June 1983 on instability in the Communist Balkans as an example of intelligence alerting policymakers to looming strategic problems.) But Bob also indicated that there was

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\* DDI Typescript, 15 June 1983, Instability in the Communist Balkans: Causes and Implications.

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not enough intelligence precisely when needed. Then, closing a circle of futility, he admitted that most policymakers' preoccupations with immediate tasks make it unlikely they would focus much on topics of future concern even with the best analytical assistance.

Another factor influencing my thinking is that the wrapup session produced a near consensus--and for Balkan specialists that is about as close to unanimity as you can come--that Yugoslavia's internal problems could be the spark that sets the region alight again.

3. As a corollary to my unease about the region, I also sense that the historically anomalous absence of an active rivalry between outside powers--the old "Great Game" of subversion and battles for influence--might be lulling us to dangerous assumptions about regional stability. Throughout the conference, speakers stressed that the nature of the Balkan problem has shifted from classic disruptions by foreign meddlers to risks arising from internal instability--which the Blocs cannot control, yet ignore at considerable risk.

-- [ ] of Oxford --an ex-RFE staffer--best expressed the idea by setting a historical context in which the waning of the Turkish, Austro-Hungarian and Russian imperial influences have left the Balkan states freer to pursue their narrow rivalries without restraint.

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-- [ ] the University of Illinois at Chicago also pointed out the lack of mutual security attempts since the failure of the Balkan Pact of 1954 due to the collapse of a brief, Greek-Turkish rapprochement. He may not know about some of the bilateral contacts--like, the regular Yugoslav-Romanian military talks--but his point about multilateral security efforts and understandings is valid.

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-- On the more positive side, both [ ] from Indiana stressed that the impact of the process of modernization on the once rigid social systems in the area is badly understood. There is now a common pool of information, an extensive exposure to foreign attitudes and technology and first-hand experience in Europe by millions of Balkan tourists and guest-workers. But the effects of these developments is hard to gauge. Some disruptions are evident but there also are some trends that might have a unifying effect on the region and could provide opportunities for an imaginative Western policy.

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-- The Balkan situation seems ripe for an increase in Soviet activity but only a few of the speakers credited the proposition that the Soviets would see threats or

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opportunities in this situation. [redacted]  
and I dissented from this relaxed view. We pointed out the existence of two troubled Warsaw Pact regimes in the Balkan Peninsula and opportunities for Soviet meddling in Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey and Albania.)

4. My last point concerns general US inattention to the region.

- The academics stated that this was the first conference held on the topic in the US since the late 1950s.
- Ambassador Barry complained that Dartmouth, where he studied Balkan affairs as an undergraduate, has scotched the program for economy's sake.

I think we do a better job in government and specifically in the intelligence sector but, since our priorities are shaped by the needs of policymakers, we tend to concentrate on short-term and departmental issues with operational priorities in mind. And there is no evidence that our major NATO partners--despite their past experiences in the region--are doing a better job than we. In short, if we continue to neglect the broad strategic context and knowledge about a region as potentially important as the Balkans, we may pay the price later in hasty and poorly advised policy responses. I would therefore add the Balkans to Bob Gates' list of regions and issues\* where we would be wise to begin thinking more about the unthinkable.

6. Clearly there are no quick fixes nor simple ways to address the problem. The conference helped in raising sensitivities both inside and outside the government. The next step is to tap some of the better ideas which came from the outside speakers at the conference. Of these Balkan specialists, J [redacted] struck me as the more provocative in their thinking. With Bob Gates' approval in principle, [redacted] and I have already followed up with [redacted] and [redacted] to consider papers on problems looming in the Balkans.

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- [redacted] will look at the possible catalysts for conflict in the region--which he sees as coming primarily from Yugoslavia.

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- [redacted] has started by giving us an advance copy of a paper he hopes to publish in an academic journal on the Yugoslav situation. We are talking with [redacted] about doing a contract paper on what might happen in Yugoslavia between now and 1990.

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\* Memorandum on Priorities, 3 June 1985

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-- In addition, I will be getting [ ] advice on some experts who might give fresh thoughts on Soviet attitudes toward the region and on Moscow's likely behavior in the event of a crisis there.

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-- I am also considering asking [ ] to do a paper on how the Greeks and Turks might get a grip on their bloody-minded quarrelsomeness.

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I intend these papers to be free form and speculative. Their main purpose would be to help us develop future collection and analytical strategies.

  
George Kolt

Attachment:  
Agenda for the Balkan Conference

## Distribution:

1 - DCI  
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## BALKANS REGIONAL CONFERENCE

### AGENDA

1. Dinner Session, June 11, 6:30 pm. Keynote Address and Conference  
Theme: "The Strategic Importance of the Balkans for US Interests"  
Speaker: Ambassador Robert Barry

2. Wednesday, June 12.

#### ELEMENTS OF INSTABILITY 9:00 am

##### 0915-1030 Traditional Destabilizing Forces

Overview of ethnic problems and irredentist movements in the Balkans.

Presenter: Alex Alexiev, The Rand Corporation.

##### 1030-1045 BREAK

##### 1045-1200 New Destabilizing Developments

Prospects for post-Hoxha Albania

Presenter: Elez Biberaj, USIA

##### 1200-1330 LUNCH

##### 1330-1500 Other States in Transition

Jugoslavia: five years after Tito

Presenter: [ ] Brandeis University

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Turkey's post-martial law prospects

Presenter: [ ] University of Illinois

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What's ahead for Greece?

Presenter: [ ], Queens College

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##### 1500-1515 BREAK

##### 1515-1700 KEY FORCES FOR STABILITY AND INSTABILITY--Overview

Generational change

Role of the military

Economic decline

Presenter: [ ] formerly Radio Free Europe

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3. **Thursday, June 13.**

**CROSS-BLOC DEVELOPMENTS: DIVERGENCES FROM EAST/WEST PATTERNS?**

0900-1030 **Bilateral Cross-Bloc Relations**

**Balkan Regional Cooperation**

**Presenter:** [REDACTED] **Institute for East-West  
Security, Cornell University**

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1030-1045 **BREAK**

1100-1230 **WRAP-UP--CATALYSTS FOR CRISIS: IMPLICATIONS FOR US**

**Strategic concerns in the Balkans (Southern Flank;  
trends in Bloc relations)**

**Implications for Great Power rivalry**

**Presenter:** [REDACTED] **Indiana University**

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